

CLYDESIDE ACTION ON ASBESTOS
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Hullo there

Clydeside Action on Asbestos is a registered charity unlike any other. Since the start of the year more than 20 of our members are now dead. Our group was founded and continues to be run by victims of asbestos in mutual support and counsel of other victims and their families. In the greater Glasgow area - including Greenock and Clydebank - there is a 7 times higher incidence of asbestos-related diseases than the U.K. average. And that's the 'official' figure. There is no known cure for asbestos poisoning. The asbestos fibre is indestructible. It is estimated that somewhere in the region of 20,000 shipyard workers have died since the end of the 2nd World War from deadly illnesses like mesothelioma and asbestos-induced lung cancers. And due to the long latency period of these diseases the peak of the suffering will not be reached for a further generation.

When the group got going and built on our knowledge of these diseases and their cause we approached appropriate agencies and official bodies - including trades' unions - for recognition and support; and, incredibly, found that no one would listen. Not that they weren't interested. The shipyard owners and the controllers of the asbestos industry had known for the best part of the last 100 years about the deadly risks associated with asbestos. Their only concern was to keep the public and their workforce ignorant of its devastating effects; countless workers and their families have now been contaminated. In pursuit of massive profits these 'champions and captains of industry' ensured that throughout the 20th century asbestos was incorporated into the material infrastructure of the entire industrial world. This to such an extent that halting its use and stripping out that which already exists could bankrupt national economies let alone multinational corporations.

In their pursuit of knowledge and information on the subject asbestos victims and their supporters are helping expose possibly the most far-reaching global conspiracy of industrial history. Industrialists, corporate managements and insurance companies have joined hands with government departments, the legal profession and the medical authorities to form a chain of denial

of the proven causal links between asbestos and a variety of progressive, degenerating, in effect terminal, illnesses.

Against overwhelming odds Clydeside Action on Asbestos have called on all the scientific and medical research available, searching out precedents as best we can, whether from the U.S.A., Australia or South Africa; and in the process we have tried to establish a network of information across the world. We have clear and conclusive proof of the effects of asbestos, not only on the people who have been forced to work with it, but on society at large. Asbestos has been, and in many cases still is, a base material in numerous household and commercial commodities, ranging from clothes to brake-shoes, from frost and sound insulation to its integral use in power stations, the shipbuilding, construction and even nuclear industries. In short, through abuses and official misinformation, the asbestos fibre is now in the ecological system, carrying its indestructible poison throughout the world. No longer do people have to work with it to catch its related diseases.

Even so, but perhaps not surprisingly, government support remains unforthcoming, and victims are left isolated and unrecognised. There isn't one solitary hospice in the whole of Europe; there isn't one post-graduate school devoted to research in the whole of the United Kingdom.

Clydeside Action on Asbestos has developed a structure of practical support for victims and its Glasgow office is the central 'HQ' for a number of concerned individuals and groups both in Scotland and elsewhere in the U.K. The work is entirely voluntary. We exist by donations, mainly from our members and other victims, and also fund-raising ventures and events. But as we achieve recognition an ever-increasing number of victims approach us for support and counsel. We now have more than 500 members but many are far too ill to help in the day-to-day running of the group. Recently a few sympathetic individuals and some rank and file trade union members have lent support, both financially and otherwise.

We must build on this. As might be expected all the usual ways of raising money have been tried, but the limitations of these single-event type efforts have become obvious as the demands increase. After much discussion around the problem Clydeside Action on Asbestos need to build a more permanent network and support structure. It is crucial to realise how important this is, given that most of our members are suffering from progressive illnesses and that the future is always uncertain.

To achieve the necessary stability required we need more and more people who are not themselves victims of asbestos to affiliate to Clydeside Action on Asbestos. This way every one sympathetic can do their bit, no matter how small.

The reason why we have contacted your good self is quite straightforward; people like yourself are 'notable personalities' who have the contacts and also the power to get more people

together in support of genuinely worthy causes, in other words - whether you like it or not! - you are a member of the 'few-and-far-between-club'. While there are a few of us, helped by a few sympathetic supporters, who are able to take care of the day-to-day work, it takes the 'out-of-the-ordinary' like yourself to attract support and publicity.

No begging and no coercion and no self righteous pleas to make you feel guilty. The group simply asks that you affiliate to the group. In itself that can be something special for this group. And by the way, it's not all doom and soot bloom. There as much camaraderie and kidology as you get anywhere. So why not contact us and have some fun and real pleasure giving other folk a break! There may be ways of offering other help. But as we said, that isn't necessary and there won't be any guilt-trips either way. Contact us if you want any further information. Our office is down Glasgow's 'Briggait' - halfway between Paddy's Market and the City Mortuary.

Best wishes,

Bert Connors
Chairperson.

[first 'notable personalities' approached and confirmed
their affiliation: Alasdair Gray, Tom Leonard, Jim Kelman
John Byrne, Brendan McLaughlin.]